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A STEP TOWARD ESTABLISHING A UNIFORM CURRICULUM

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"STATE REGISTRATION," like many another movement for the betterment of existing conditions, brings with it certain problems, and the object of this article is to offer (in part at least) a solution of one of these problems.

What I have to present is, I am aware, no new idea, but merely a statement of what is actually being done at the present time in the way of a uniform curriculum in Kansas City, where there are many small hospitals.

We will assume that the superintendent of the small hospital is quite the hardest-worked woman in the service. Every department of the institution comes under her supervision, and makes its daily demands upon her, so that she must (in theory at least) be an engineer, laundress, cook, plumber, gardener, chambermaid, bookkeeper, electrician, and, withal, a teacher and trainer of nurses. It is my opinion that, in spite of her multitudinous duties, this incomparable woman has turned out from her workshop much of the splendid material to be found in the nursing world to-day.

Some of these institutions through fortunate financial conditions are enabled to employ a superintendent of nurses, but a majority are not so favored, and it is of these I now wish to speak. State Board examinations loom up before the superintendent of the small hospital, reminding her that she must give more time to class work, and as she is already robbing herself of many hours that should be spent in rest and recreation, she is (if you will excuse the slang) "up against it."

In Kansas City circumstances led to what may aptly be termed the "entering wedge" of a uniform curriculum for nurse training schools.

A training school superintendent of many years' standing, being temporarily disengaged, was approached on the subject of holding classes for nurses in some five or six different hospitals, and in the spring of 1911 this work was begun experimentally. The branches taught were nursing ethics, anatomy and physiology, bacteriology, and certain special nursing subjects. In some schools, senior and junior classes were held one after the other; in some, the same subject was taken up by both classes, notably nursing ethics, and this by request of the superintendent.

At the present time a more systematic, but far from perfect, plan is followed. In some instances the system adopted has for its reason the exigencies of that particular case; time alone will bring absolute harmony.

The teacher meets the superintendents and discusses with them just what subjects they wish her to teach. It will no doubt be generally conceded that some things can be taught to better advantage by one who is in daily contact with her pupils and who has the opportunity of observing the practical application of her teaching. Where is the superintendent who has not, after the plainest talks, and the most exhaustive explanations relating to the technic of the common, every-day duties of the nurse, been discouraged, disheartened, and disgusted, when making her numerous daily rounds, to find them being performed in just the other way. The teacher from the outside may teach along certain lines and feel that she has made a good impression and imparted much useful knowledge, but she has not the opportunity of following up and testing her theories.

In Kansas City a portion of the teaching in six hospital training schools is supplied from an outside source. It is to be understood that the teacher is a nurse of many years' experience as the head of a training school. To follow the work as it is being carried on at the present time can be done in a few words. The schools may be designated as A, B, C, D, E, F, and I would also state that they are not very far apart.

On Monday, at 4 P.M., the teacher goes to A, where she holds a class for seniors, the subject being bacteriology; on Tuesday, to B, where an afternoon class for juniors in anatomy and physiology is held, and in the evening of the same day, classes are held at C, junior and senior following each other,—anatomy and physiology for the former, and bacteriology for the latter. On Wednesday, at 7 P.M. a mixed class at D, that is to say, all who can be spared attend this class, and general nursing is the theme. On Thursday an afternoon class is held at E for juniors and an evening class at the same place for seniors. On Friday, at F, two classes are held, one after the other, in the evening.

The subjects are practically the same throughout: anatomy and physiology for the juniors, and bacteriology for seniors. A portion of the time is devoted to a quiz, and the teacher encourages the asking of questions after the class is over, which questions may be on any subject connected with nursing.

In every instance the fall work commenced with a recapitulation of the subject matter gone over in the spring of the present year, and a most careful examination will be held at the close of the classes. It is

believed and hoped that these examinations will bring out some interesting facts, for the pupils have exhibited an unusual desire to improve their opportunities, and this is no doubt owing largely to the fact of State Registration and all that it implies.

What I have so imperfectly sketched contains much that is crude, I am aware, but that an adjustment of small difficulties and mature plans will eventually ensue is confidently believed. The books used by the teacher in preparing her work are many, of course, but those commonly used, so far, and recommended to the pupils are: Kimber's Anatomy and Physiology, Pattee's Practical Dietetics, McIsaac's Bacteriology, Maxwell and Pope's Practical Nursing, Pope's Quiz Book of Nursing, Robbs' Nursing Ethics.

Of course no one person can do all the teaching in six hospital training schools, but one can do much to relieve six overworked superintendents, two or three can do much more, and the cost to each hospital would be a small matter compared with the salary of a superintendent of nurses, for I have in mind now those institutions where a superintendent of nurses is out of the question.

It will be a long time before such hospitals will cease to exist; that many of them are doing splendid work cannot be denied, and it is believed that the plan for instruction inaugurated in our city will be productive of good results, and do much to prepare pupils for their State Board examinations.

Thus far I have spoken of this work only as it concerns the small hospital, but I do not wish to imply that the system of teaching advocated is presented as a help (necessity, if you will) in regard to this class only. A superintendent of nurses in a medium or large hospital should certainly be relieved of at least half of the class work. She may not (as in the case of her sister in the small hospital) be obliged to interview the butcher and the baker, the grocer and the milkman, the coal man and the ice man, but in her own department she has equally arduous duties, and the conscientious superintendent of nurses has no idle moments. *She* also needs help in her class work, and if she does not have it, something must give way in time, and more often than not it is the nervous system of an overtaxed woman.

A word as to the doctors' lectures to nurses may not be amiss. I recall with thankfulness the help received from those doctors who took the matter of imparting knowledge to nurses seriously, and who knew how to teach. Candor, however, compels me to make the statement that such are in the minority. But apart from this, the doctor is a busy man and, when it is a question of a professional call or a lecture to nurses,

as a rule the lecture goes by default. It is undoubtedly true that lectures by the medical staff are of inestimable value when delivered to third-year nurses, whose minds have been prepared by organized study, well-chosen classes and demonstrations by teachers who have time and opportunity for preparing themselves for this work.

In most nursing communities there are women who for various reasons are debarred from private nursing or active institutional work. Many of these women have the necessary equipment of the teacher, and while there are few who can teach all subjects, the majority are capable of taking up one or two, and of imparting them to others. Thus a number of persons would be benefited by the general adoption of a plan, whereby the teaching of pupil nurses would not depend wholly upon those whose duties in the hospital are arduous enough, without the addition of class work every day. The pupil is benefited because she receives instruction from some one who has the time to give to her subject and is not likely to be interrupted. The superintendent is benefited, for reasons stated several times in this article. The doctor is benefited because when he lectures he will find better ground for the seeds of knowledge he wishes to impart, and the teacher is benefited, having the satisfaction of knowing that she is (if the phrase be not entirely worn out) "filling a long-felt want."

In writing the foregoing I have not lost sight of the fact that we have perhaps in "The Department of Nursing and Health," in "Teachers' College, Columbia University," the solution of the teaching problem in the training school of the future. I have dealt entirely with present conditions in certain localities and with the means for teaching now at hand.

MENTAL HYGIENE IN ILLINOIS

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THE Illinois Society for Mental Hygiene was incorporated under the laws of the state in the early summer of 1910, its general object being to study cases of mental and nervous breakdown with the hope of being able to use preventive measures when the case was border-line and to educate the public away from the idea that the patient suffering from mental breakdown had to be treated like a criminal, that he was ill and must be so recognized.